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St. Mark's Sixtieth Anniversary

1850 - 1910

CATHEDRAL STONES

A Discourse delivered by

Rev. Spencer S. Roche, D.D.

I N

ST. MARK'S CHURCH

BROOKLYN

Sunday, December 11, 1910

At the Unveiling of Mural Fragments from Glastonbury, Gloucester, Hereford, Canterbury and Westminster

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CATHEDRAL STONES

"What mean ye by these stones?"—Joshua 4:6.

The erection of monuments to commemorate notable achievements is as old as the history of the race. The divine sanction is here given to the custom. Israel entering the promised land by walking on the bed of the River Jordan, was to place a heap of stones that would perpetuate the teachings of the event. The River Jordan by the command of Jehovah, was dried up to assure the people once more, as at the Red Sea where the waters had been parted and Pharoah overthrown, that the divine favor was with them. Picture the scene: Descending from the uplands which lay to the east of Jordan, and leaving the groves of acacia, they reached the river's brink. It was the spring of the year and the river was at its flood, the waters reaching to the tangled thicket growth on either bank. As the priests advanced with the ark, the swelling tide was stayed. In the striking words of Dean Stanley: "High up the river as far as the parts of Kirjathjearim, thirty miles above the place of the encampment, the waters stood, and rose up as if in a barrier or heap, as if congealed, and the waters that descended towards the sea of the desert, the salt sea, failed and were cut off." Almost from the Sea of Tiberias to the Dead Sea, Jordan's channel lay open. By the banks the sedge and pebbles appeared, while in the muddy bottom amid stream, ancient boulders were uncovered. Where the deepest tides had rushed, now stood the priests uplifting the Ark of the Tabernacle, their feet in the ooze or sand. To their right as they looked westward to their new home, Jordan's billows were restrained; to their left rushed the people tumultuous, fearful lest the strange control of the river should suddenly cease. As their eyes lighted on the priests and the Ark, and they thought these must be carried down first, they regained confidence. The

army, the women, the children, the sick and lame, with their herds and flocks, all crossed safely. Once more Jehovah had fulfilled His promise, and the tribes had conquered fear.

Of this event Jehovah commanded there should be a memorial. The twelve chiefs of tribes were told to take each from the channel of the Jordan, a stone, and to bear it aloft on their shoulders before the priests, as they left the river bed. Lying unseen for ages and this day exposed to the sun, these stones were to be built together into a monument on the high ground west of the Jordan. Right there at Gilgal was the first spot pronounced "Holy" in the new land, and there the Tabernacle stood till it was taken to Shiloh. How long did this cairn remain? We cannot say, but scholars remind us that fourteen hundred years later, John the Baptist was preaching in Judea at Bethabara, the place where the people had passed over, as he baptized the people unto repentance. It may have been this very historic pile he pointed to when he said, "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." What we do know is that God appointed these twelve stones to remain for the children's children of these wanderers, in order that the lesson of His everlasting faithfulness to His promises, might sound on through coming generations.

So we, entering on our celebration of the sixtieth year, place five stones beside our Font and Pulpit. Like those on the bottom of the Jordan, they are in themselves eloquent memorials. They have intrinsic meaning. Instead of being buried beneath a river's waves, they have been for centuries in the walls of certain of the most renowned churches in Christendom. They were secured by the Rector during a visit to England in the summer of 1906. He personally obtained each fragment. Let me first speak of their physical properties; then of their historical suggestions; then of their prophetic teachings. The stone from Glastonbury Abbey has a rough, rectangular form, something like five inches in length by three inches in width. It is heavy, indurated, having been long exposed to the elements. On one side is a deep groove, perhaps a mason's device to secure

the stone in cement. The stone from Gloucester Cathedral is triangular, with a sharp edge at the back, rudely axform, having on the face two flat grooves as if scraped or tooled in the rough, soft, gritty, white-yellow sandstone. The stone from Hereford Cathedral is quite hard, blue-gray, flat, having one side smooth, the other rough. It appears to be a fine conglomerate. The stone from Westminster Abbey is larger than the others, and forms a rounded volute, or molding, or cornice. The face is weather-stained but not like the Glastonbury stone, this being simply blackened with London soot and fog, the stone underneath remaining smooth. In texture this stone resembles that from Gloucester, a yellow, coarse sandstone, almost chalky, a fine dust coming off wherever the hand touches the newly-broken surface. From Canterbury we have a fragment of reddish tile, with two smooth sides, one foot-worn.

Now for a little history. The Abbey of Glastonbury, Somersetshire, England, represented to-day by a few crumbling walls, is so old that its beginning is clouded with fable. It was certainly one of the earliest spots where the Gospel was preached in England. Mr. Freeman says: "It is on any showing, a tie between the Briton and the Englishman, between the older Christianity of our island and the newer, the one church of the first rank which lived through the storm of English conquest, which passed into the hands of our victorious fathers as a trophy of victory, undestroyed and unplundered." The monks declared that the first church of Glastonbury was a little wattled or thatched building, erected by Joseph of Arimathea as the leader of the twelve apostolic missionaries sent over to Briton from Gaul by St. Philip. About one hundred and sixty years later, two missionaries were sent by Pope Eleutherius to the British king, Lucius. These established a monastery, where three hundred years later, St. Patrick introduced a very strict rule. In the eighth century, the great West Saxon King Ine, greatly enlarged the monastery. When the Danes invaded England the church suffered, but it was nobly restored by Dunstan, appointed abbot not long before the year 950. I pass over the feuds and

squabbles of the monks of Glastonbury with other not over religious clerics. Enough to say that the popes, and especially the great Pope Innocent III., found it necessary to interfere in the interests of peace. Nor shall I mention the shameful arraignment and execution of the sixtieth abbot of Glastonbury, Robert Whiting, one of the ablest and purest churchmen of his day. Within the church, it was claimed, were the tombs of King Arthur and St. Dunstan. With the Norman Conquest the new rulers resolved to build a far finer church. After this in turn had been destroyed by fire, Henry II., King of England, entered upon the construction of a magnificent edifice. From those walls, erected about seven hundred years ago, this stone has been taken, having for ages lain in the wall of St. Joseph's Chapel.

The stone from Gloucester is likewise from one of the oldest foundations in England. The first Christian king of Mercia, Wulphere, about 670 built a nunnery, which in the lapse of the centuries developed into a very striking architectural mass. I will not speak of the splendor of the present building, the cloisters with their exquisite fan-vaulting having no rival in England. Let me rather connect this old foundation with the Christianity of to-day. That fragment may have been seen and even touched, by a man who gathers into his experience and spirit almost every element of our Church's present grandeur. John Hooper became Bishop of Gloucester in 1550. He discharged his duty with a diligence, zeal and self-sacrifice shown by very few bishops in the history of the Christian Church. Perhaps no man comes nearer to the exquisite creation by Victor Hugo, of the bishop who by the spirit of his divine Master, redeemed Jean Valjean. It was Hooper's custom to preach three or four times a day in the towns and villages of his diocese. His wife implored his friends to urge him to do less work in order that his life might not be prematurely poured out. He made the closest inquiry into the learning, diligence, doctrine, behaviour and worldly condition of his clergy. Wherever a priest was not receiving an appropriate stipend, he augmented his living out of his own income. In the hall of his palace, he supplied a dinner daily to the poor of Glou-

cester, sitting down on the benches and sharing it with them. When Edward VI. died and Queen Mary came to the throne, he was arrested, kept prisoner for eighteen months, tried for being a heretic, condemned to death, and two weeks later was burned alive at the stake before his own cathedral! Not far from the room in which Hooper spent the night before his death, stands a house, timber-framed, where Robert Raikes, the founder of our Sunday Schools lived and worked.

The flat, blue stone is from the singularly beautiful Cathedral of Hereford, which exhibits, architects tell us, almost every step in the successive development of what is known as the Old English Style. What is more to our purpose, Hereford reminds us of the turbulent and warlike conditions of the age. The old Saxon ruler, Offa, lived not far from here. In the neighborhood, he murdered Ethelbert; on the hills in the immediate vicinity, are the ruins of certain Norman castles, whose lawless barons had constant battlings with one another.

The tiling is from one of the most fascinating and sacred spots in the religious world. We have all heard of the glories of Canterbury Cathedral. Here is the official residence of the archbishop and primate of all England, the head of the Anglican Church throughout the world. In its immense size, freshness of aspect, endless vistas, and in its history, the structure is one of the most notable ever erected in any land. On this ground it is believed that a Christian church was built in Roman-British times by King Lucius. Persecution arising, the Christians were driven out and their edifice turned into a Pagan temple. When St. Augustine came to England in the sixth century, King Ethelbert bestowed upon him this building, which had again become a church. By the Norman Conquest, 1066, the old foundation had almost disappeared. Lanfranc, the first Norman archbishop, set about the erection of a cathedral. Finished in 1130, this structure was burned in 1174, standing therefore but forty-four years. Just four years before its destruction, martyr's blood stained the walls. The king, Henry II., was enraged at certain acts of the archbishop, Thomas Becket. Four barons thought they would

serve the king's will by making way with the prelate. They came in by a side door while the archbishop with his assistants was reading the vesper service. His friends urged Becket to stop the service and run into the vault under the sanctuary, or to ascend to the roof, by a secret staircase in one of the great columns. With characteristic courage he refused, and facing his assailants was cut down, between the Chapel of St. Benedict and the passage to the crypt. What is believed to be the exact spot where he fell, is marked by a small square incision in the pavement. A mighty wave of indignation swept over the country, and indeed over western Christendom. The king by the severest penance endeavored to make it clear that he was not responsible for the saint's death, and he immediately set about the erection of the present edifice which we believe to be far more magnificent than that sanctified by the death of this great churchman, though not perhaps at every point prudent man. Yonder red stone has been taken from the crypt of St. Benedict, within a very few feet of the spot where the archbishop fell.

Our last stone is from Westminster Abbey. On the low ground by the left bank of the Thames, on a point of land overgrown with thorns and nearly surrounded by water, a church in honor of St. Peter is believed to have been erected by Sebert, the Anglo-Saxon king about 616. No need to recount any of the history: it is writ large upon the entire structure of English feudalism, royalty, liberty and progress.

But enough of the material objects. What of their teachings? Why place these rocks in this St. Mark's Church in Brooklyn as we commemorate our founding sixty years ago? Glastonbury should teach us to deserve and to expect, and to prepare for long life. Churches are planted to live and grow. Glastonbury stands for the bringing into England of the Gospel, when our British forefathers were still under the rule of the Roman Empire, and possibly not long after the ascension of our Lord. Just how long it is since that stone was quarried and set in the sacred wall, we cannot tell, but we are certainly dealing with a vast stretch of time. What better expression in visible form could we have

of the perpetuity of the Church? What a fulfilment of Christ's words,—"On this rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!" St. Mark's Church is needed now and on this very spot. He who imagines America will outgrow the Gospel, reckons not with the spiritual instinct of the human mind, nor with the shrewd common sense of the American people, nor with their Anglo-Saxon liking for law and order, nor with the conspicuous failure of the systems that rest on superstition or on the negations of unbelief. Nor yet does he recollect over how many obstacles Christianity has triumphed since she emerged from the Catacombs and laid the first stones in the walls of her earliest edifices. As we complete sixty years, we may well build into these walls, that which should remind us and whoever may worship within these sacred precincts, that the Church has the promise of everlasting life, of absolute security against evil, and all because the Church is the body, in this world, of Jesus Christ, "who is the same yesterday, today and forever." Human devotion may be so weak that the Church in any given locality may lose its virility and die and be forgotten. But this memorial should teach us that if we show the fidelity that every Christian should exhibit, there is no limit to the good that the Church of God may accomplish right here. The Church abides. At many an hour of disappointment and defeat, she may seem about to die, but wherever man does his part the Church lives on, instinct with the eternity of goodness, immortal with the life of God.

Quite different is the admonition from Gloucester. Here let us think, not so much of our heritage from the past as of our blessings and opportunities in the present. This Church is a reformed church, free from medieval intolerance and superstition and corruption. At a time when some irreconcilable bigots are trying to forget the name, and to obscure the spirit of Protestantism, we should not be ashamed that we have had martyrs who died to secure our spiritual liberties and to dower us with the freedom that is in Christ. Gloucester gave us the Sunday School, and let this Church never forget, that among Christ's most tender

and most insistent commands, this is one,—"Feed my lambs." Thank God for all the Church has done in our day by pleading the spirit of Christ in behalf of the physical care and the mental culture and the spiritual instruction, and the legal protection of children. But children are only one class. In this, as in every age, the Gospel must vindicate itself in pointing out the method to right the wrongs of that age. To glorify God, she studies the conditions of the times and the peoples, and directs all attainable instrumentalities for human advancement. With every evil of our times, Christianity is to contend. Not now does theological controversy screw the rack and light the fagot, but yet selfishness puts horrid sufferings on countless multitudes. The rapacious landlord still herds the poor in foul, unhealthy lodgings, extorting the last farthing of rent; chartered corporations having the right to transport passengers through our avenues, crowd men and women indecently. Look at the riotous extravagance of the very rich in face of a wide-spread poverty which hurries a father to suicide and the tender children to crushing hours of labor! The Church of God must war against human pride, ostentation and indifference to our brothers' sufferings. It is the Church's duty to save women from excessive toil in factories; to provide for pensioning worthy workers; to punish cruelty to animals. Just as black slavery has been ended and the traffic made everywhere abominable, so white slavery must have the light of a national indignation flashed upon it. Let Gloucester bid us be up and doing in presence of every social injustice! Let the soul of John Hooper march on! Let each Christian feel that in sacred energy and not in ignoble sloth, lies his duty.

Learn from Hereford that the Church is to continue to preach a Gospel of peace,—peace betwen the penitent sinner and a reconciled God; peace through divine grace in all life's troubles; peace in the household; peace among brethren; peace between Capital and Labor; peace through the world. Let us have in America what Europe in the age of the builders of Hereford did not know, concord between the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, the employer and the workman. What our socially distressed

age needs is a preaching not of charity, but of justice,—not of pauperism but of love. Dives and Lazarus must be brought together on terms of equality and in a sincere friendship. The Church must address herself to heal the wounds of industrial strife. She must plunge into the black, swift river of economic injustice.

So Hereford pleads for the peace of the world, for universal arbitration, and for the abolition of war. The battlings of armies are as absurd as, and far more wicked than, duels between men. The Church of God in arguing for peace sees, by faith, the realization of the convictions of great thinkers like Penn and Kant and Channing, and of the dreams of prophets like Isaiah and Micah. We rejoice as we place this Hereford fragment in the last days of 1910 because this very month humanity advances far on the road to universal arbitration. President Taft has just said:

"If we can negotiate and put thru a positive agreement with some great nation to abide by the adjudication of an international arbitral court in every issue which cannot be settled by negotiations no matter what it involves, whether honor, territory or money, we shall have made a long step forward by demonstrating that it is possible, for two nations at least, to establish as between them the same system of due process of law that exists between individuals under a government."

Let the voice of this Pulpit be ever for Peace! It is for wars past and for wars to come that three-quarters of our terrible taxes are levied. War, as one of the greatest generals of modern times said, "War is hell." Sir Edward Grey's warning must be heeded by all.

"Unless the incongruity and mischief of all this be brought home not only to the heads of men generally but to their feelings as well, so that they resent the inconsistency and realize the danger of this tremendous expenditure, the rivalry will continue and it must in the long run break down civilization. You are having this great burden piled up in times of peace and if it goes on increasing by leaps and bounds as it has done in the last

generation it will become intolerable. There are those who think that it will lead to war precisely because it is already becoming intolerable. I think it much more likely that the burden will be dissipated by an internal revolution, by a revolt of the masses of men against taxation."

How much better to do as a matter of high principle, as ready obedience to Jesus Christ, that which the very necessities of the case will surely demand at some not distant day! May St. Mark's throw its influence on the side of the Prince of Peace!

Let Canterbury serve as an expression of the central power and dignity of Anglicism, and as a suggestion of the world-wide unity of the Catholic Church. That tile has indeed its memories of courage even unto death in defense of truth, but it teaches the yet sublimer lesson of a universal sympathy with our Christian brethren, and of the responsibilities of each believer everywhere for the spread of the Truth that Jesus Christ proclaimed. We ought to strive for the devotion of a Becket and for the Unity which should reach much farther than does the authority of Canterbury. "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; even as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me."

Last of all, Westminster Abbey is at once the spot where, thru centuries, kings and queens have received their crowns and sceptres, and where at length their bodies have been brought in death. Here are the tombs of famous poets, orators, statesmen, discoverers, philanthropists. Here are centred the most glorious traditions of English history. The influences that dignify, the memories that inspire, and the emotions that move human hearts, are all clustered about this magnificent pile. Westminster grandly lifts before the world a golden banner, on whose ample folds is emblazoned a cross with the device, "In this thou shalt conquer." Those blackened arches, written over with mighty names, invest humanity with the highest dignity and splendor. That which glorifies Westminster, offers this, and every church

a like splendor. More than ever before, this world needs the Gospel, not as a symbol of aestheticism, nor as a system of philosophy, but as a leaven of righteousness. This particular parish has been called of God to set forth in this definite locality, that Truth which includes all other truths, which speaks of God in His dealings with man, and of man in his duties toward God and all his brethren. Christianity sounds every depth of man's ethical and spiritual needs in this life, and lifts life to utmost power by bringing into prominence the hopes and fears which look out on eternity. Yonder graceful fragment, broken from an ancient wall, points this church and all humanity to the spiritual place of Manhood's coronation at the hands of our Great High Priest. He that asks when, and whereby shall mankind enter into the royal inheritance of culture, happiness and glory, must kneel down at the feet of Jesus Christ.

We may sum up the teachings of these five stones in two words, Liberty and Catholicity:—the Liberty that means Activity for God, and the Catholicity that means Universal Love. Each must work. Our effect as a Christian Church upon this community depends on our individual fidelity to Christ. Every man must do his duty. Not a child in the Sunday School can be exempted. Mass in final analysis is atomic. The danger in all social institutions is loss of individual responsibility. As this makes democracy a delusion, so it renders worship a mockery. A congregation is the grandest thing on this side of heaven, only when each heart lifts to that God who is a Spirit, true adoration. We are not to lose the sense of personality in the rapture of anthems from a thousand throats. With sympathy, each soul must feel itself in the presence of God. Is it not so everywhere? Here is a board of bank directors. Let each for the welfare of the bank, meet each question with his own individual ideas of propriety and honesty and justice. The bank director who sinks his own conscience in the board's conscience, betrays his conception of right. Here is an army. The soldier is a coward and traitor who says,—The rest are brave; I can hide behind a tree. The church attendant who lets others do the

praying and receiving the Communion, is a hyprocite. Draw near yourself to God. Act for yourself. Robert Louis Stevenson has somewhere said: "To know what you prefer, instead of humbly saying Amen to what the world tells you you ought to prefer, is to have kept your soul alive." Show energy for Jesus Christ! God forbid we should be dead stones! If we say our Creed complacently without feeling it necessary to understand the Creed and to spread acceptance of the Creed, we are lifeless stones; if we talk about "our beautiful service" and stay away from its public rendering whenever we find it inconvenient to go, we are motionless stones; if we feel called on to make no effort whatever to give that beautiful service to the neglected of our own city and the heathen in other lands, we are cold stones; if we hear of the troubles of others by sickness, poverty and vice, and yet feel called on to deny ourselves nothing, to make no contribution to our brother's necessity, we are bloodless stones; if we would rather go to a club or a carnival or a bridge whist, or a theatre or a dance, than to give that evening to some poor sufferer, we have hearts of stone; if we busy ourselves about religion and relief only when we can do so without troubling ourselves, without sacrificing our comfort or our money, we are no softer than a stone; if we know of a parish where many people of this easy, luxurious, contented sort can be found, then we've got a whited sepulchre, fair without but full of dead men's bones. The great question for a modern Church is this: Can these dead stones live? Bishop Gailor says that the Episcopal Church in America is endeavoring to carry a greater mass of dead timber, than can be found in any other branch of Christendom. Let us as living stones be built up into a spiritual house. Go to work, in the name of God! Too much have Christians thought of the care they must take of their own souls. The doctrine of personal salvation has lodged itself in morbid minds. Better stop asking, "What must I do to be saved?" and ask, with the humble heart, "Who is my neighbor?" and listen to the voice that says,—"Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he is thy brother."

So we come face to face with our other truth, the sense of the Catholicity of the Church which binds us in a spirit of Love to every soul. Let our ideas here in St. Mark's soar above narrow parochial, diocesan, national boundaries to the conception of one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, comprehensive of every truth and activity that belongs to any of the scattered parts, united, as Christ is one with the Father. As we pray in this beautiful building, let us look toward these stones and realize something of our Lord's meaning. "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd" (St. John, 10:16). Overcome the common temptation to despise Christians of other names, or to belittle or to ignore their work. As we think of Greek and Latin Christians, and of many a scattered church, and of many a company of those who differ from ourselves and yet believe and call themselves Christians, and consider their organizations to be true Churches, let us remember those other words of Christ. When the beloved disciple told how he had been perplexed as they saw one casting out demons in Christ's name who yet followed not with the disciples, and how it had seemed right to forbid him, Jesus said, "Forbid him not: for there is no man who shall do a mighty work in my name, and be able quickly to speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is for us" (St. Mark, 9:38). The churches need more sympathy between the people, a closer bond of interest. Of the Bell Telephone System it is said that they have four million five thousand telephones that can be instantly connected with any of the others. I like the words that describe the method that they employ. They call it inter-connection and inter-communication, the one depending on the other. The people in all the churches need to be inter-connected by Christ's great secret of love, and when once this subtle and universal touch has been given, we need the recurring inter-communication through all the ramifying lines of Christendom. How foolish for us instead, to render another illustration of Christ's truth, that the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of

light. We want the seamless robe of Jesus Christ. We should find in the incident of this day, food for abundant thought. As these distant and famous churches may be said to give something of their strength to these walls, so the life of the whole Church must partake of the life of each of the members. The fragments of a broken Christendom must contribute to a new vitality. Into the perfect Church of the future, each local and national church will bring its own special character and excellence. Into this Holy City yet to be builded, the kingdoms of the earth will bring each its own glory. Catholicity will be all inclusive, while differences in method and varieties of spirit will be lost in the blazing splendor of Perfect Love.

The intense, incisive question rings in our ears, "What mean ye by these stones?" Shall not the whole body of our parishioners reply, We will pledge our lives, our strength and our resources to perpetuate in the life of ages, this Parish of St. Mark; we will carry on this church in loyalty to the faith once delivered to the saints; we will show gratitude for the liberties won by the advancing kingdom of God, from the cramping influence of prejudice and from the malevolence of bigotry; we will maintain a church descended from the apostles and now planting herself on the rock of faith in Christ and utilizing all modern progress to evangelize the world of today.

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